



Maryland Public Charter Schools Principal's Institute -- May 13, 2009

On Wednesday, May 13th, **Hilda Ortiz** and **Cheryll James** from the Office of School Innovations (OSI) at the Maryland State Department of Education convened a group of charter school principals, LEA representatives, operators and invited guests at the Rosemont Elementary/Middle School in Baltimore City. The day started early with a sumptuous breakfast buffet provided by the school and to the great appreciation of institute participants. Folks enjoyed good food and opportunities to network with other principals and charter school leaders. In addition to providing time for principals to brainstorm and problem solve with colleagues, the institute had a theme for the day. *For those charter schools principals that could not make the May Principal's Institute we are providing a snapshot of the activity along with a reminder that we hope to see you at our next institute (yet to be scheduled).*

This year's theme was ***The Utilization of Best Practices***. Rosemont is uniquely suited as a venue for this activity since prior to its becoming a charter school operating under the auspices of Coppin State University, Rosemont was one of the very lowest performing schools in Maryland. Since partnering with Coppin and reopening as a public charter, the school has consistently demonstrated increasingly high academic performance amongst its students and high standards for instruction amongst its teachers. Coppin leaders remain rightfully proud of its ongoing role with Rosemont which is described below.

Fulfilling its unique mission of primarily focusing on the problems, needs and aspirations of the people of Baltimore's central city and its immediate metropolitan area, Coppin took over nearby Rosemont Elementary School in 1998, and is the first and only higher education institution in Maryland to manage a public school. Rosemont Elementary is located in the Greater Rosemont Community, an area adjacent to the University. In 1997, the Maryland Department of Education (MSDE) had declared Rosemont to be "...below acceptable standards." As operator of Rosemont, Coppin hired staff and developed the school's educational program. In 2000, Rosemont Elementary first-graders led Baltimore City in largest percentile gains in First Grade Reading. In 2003, Rosemont was removed from MSDE's "watch list" citing that Rosemont has "...made enough progress to exit the school improvement program." Retrieved from the Coppin State University website. 2009

Sandra Ashe, formerly the school principal and now School Director of Rosemont, described to us what it was like to begin with a school where community violence seeped into the building and where standards for academic performance and instruction were clearly inadequate. Ms. Ashe described some of the chaos she saw that first year and asked our group rhetorically, **"What do you do?"** Ms. Ashe bypassed the claims that the school community was "too poor, had too many drugs, too much apathy, and that the kids can't learn. Her response, which gives you an idea of how progress was made at Rosemont, was that **"You focus on instruction!"**

She shared with us that she required her teachers to keep a three-ring binder on their desks open to each day's lesson plan. Her school's classrooms had to display student rules and consequences and lesson objectives. Along with the focus on learning at the school, Coppin stepped in to offer coursework to assist teachers with further development of their craft. Efforts were made to offer professional development at the level that "our teachers need" and to wrap around the professional development to support the staff. It was a "grow your own" model designed to improve the academic outcomes for children by building the capacity of the school's staff. Overtime, teacher efficacy was built so that teachers now are excited and believe in what they do.

Our group was given a copy of the ***Classroom Environment Monitoring Sheet for 2008/2009 School Year*** and taken on a walk through classrooms. We saw many different classrooms, students, and teachers during our tour of both the elementary and middle school grades. One of the consistent observations is that students were *always* engaged in learning and teachers were *actively* teaching. This appeared to be the norm and is clearly one of the many reasons that academic performance at Rosemont continues to excel. Just look at the Maryland School Performance (MSA) results below to see how meeting the targets for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) has kept Rosemont in the forefront of high performing City schools despite its many challenges, including a 91% poverty rate.

2008 AYP Mathematics Proficiency					
		Percent Proficient	Number Proficient	Test Takers	Confidence Interval
All Students	2008	80.3	183	228	55.0 - 71.2
	2007	75.0	150	200	49.8 - 67.5
	2006	76.9	143	186	46.1 - 64.6
	2005	77.4	113	146	43.1 - 64.1
	2004	80.0	76	95	31.1 - 57.0
	2003	53.1	52	98	28.8 - 54.0

2008 AYP Reading Proficiency					
		Percent Proficient	Number Proficient	Test Takers	Confidence Interval
All Students	2008	88.2	201	228	63.9 - 79.1
	2007	77.0	154	200	58.9 - 75.8
	2006	72.0	134	186	53.8 - 71.8
	2005	78.8	115	146	47.4 - 68.1
	2004	63.2	60	95	33.3 - 59.3
	2003	38.8	38	98	31.0 - 56.5

Another practice that worked for the school is to "grow your own" which refers to training teachers through Coppin and also looking to bring in newly trained teachers from the university. Coppin offers free education coursework and a Career Professional Development School. Other tips and practices that inspired...

- Professional development has to be at the level of our teachers.
- Our teachers needed to learn how to differentiate instruction. It worked for us to create small groups of students according to skill levels.
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- Teachers have learned to assess and reassess student learning as they provide instruction.
- Student work -- no older than 15 days -- was reflected throughout classrooms and the building. We saw art projects, professional looking resumes completed by 8th graders, poems, math problems, and various other written work on hall and classroom bulletin boards. Work displayed had comments from teachers and were not just the 100% correct papers. We also saw a list of magnet high schools that 8th graders graduating from Rosemont would be attending for 9th grade, such as the Coppin Academy (on campus of the University), City College, Polytechnic High, Digital Harbor, Mergenthaler Voc-Tech, etc.
- A classroom using a Smart Board to engage students in learning
- A teacher coach for a teacher that had just transferred into the school
- Students showing effort and pride in their own work and in helping peers
- High expectations for teachers and instructional components
- High expectations for students. "All of our students are smart."
- Feeling greatness! Feeling positive! You have no choice but to do right!
- Use of daily affirmations by some folks.
- The importance of community partnerships to help fund the 'extras' at the school. For example, visitors were able to hear a rehearsal of the Rosemont Bell Band. We saw one woman running the rehearsal while she played the piano with the band of about 25 students and an audience of several classes of youngsters sat quietly. There was no 'off track' behavior.
- Consistent manner in which students are dealt with in terms of behavior and expectations.
- Building a learning community and the use of learning walks
- Writing grants with the support of Coppin to fund some of the extras
- Innovations from teachers are encouraged. A middle school E/LA presented his plan for partnering with a 4th grade E/LA class next year to teach Comprehension of Literary Text using selected novels after students first learned these at the 8th grade level. The teacher described pairing culturally relevant texts with developing learner competencies.
- Use of pacing guides to ensure progress in the classroom.
- Adapting the LEA's existing curriculum with the VSC and the charter school's philosophy and mission.

Each year the faculty revises its classroom monitoring sheet. The 12 indicators selected by staff for 2008-2009 are:

1. The room is neat and attractive and reflects the students' work.
2. Current student work is displayed with date. (15-day rule)
3. There is evidence that skill based learning centers, including Classworks (software) are used by students.
4. Rubrics are posted with display that has been utilized by teachers and students. Include positive feedback.
5. Classroom rules and consequences are posted.
6. The daily schedule is posted.
7. Lesson plans are current, visible and accessible.
8. Lesson objectives are written on the board in user-friendly know/do terms and are tied to the VSC standards.
9. The classroom presents a literate environment. (Ex. word wall, vocabulary chart)
10. There is evidence that technology is infused into the curriculum. (Ex. overhead projector, tape recorder, CD player, Smart Boards, Classworks program, etc.)
11. The current theme is reflected in the room.
12. Student work folders are accessible and up to date.

Overall, participant evaluations of the Institute rated the training as excellent and offered suggestions for next events, such as: hold trainings quarterly ♦ talk about assessments and data to move instruction ♦ offer more professional development by the State for charter schools ♦ allow time for more discussion by participants of issues we are facing and about possible solutions ♦ cover the issue of creative budgeting ♦ allow for more interaction with charter school principals serving the same grade levels ♦ give more opportunities to network and more frequent activities ♦ continue the discussion on curriculum and instruction ♦ provide networking in terms of special education professional development.



A great breakfast buffet.....



Great Presentations.....



Thank you Rosemont Charter School Staff and Students